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EXAMINER	
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ART UNIT	**PAPER NUMBER**
3623	

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	09/480,589	RUPPELT ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Beth Van Doren	3623	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *16 August 2007*.

2a)☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☒ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1,2,4-11,13-38,40-75 and 79-85* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1,2,4-11,13-38,40-75 and 79-85* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 08/16/07 has been entered.

Claims 1, 4, 18-19, 28, 45-46, 55, and 64 have been amended. Claims 1-2, 4-11, 13-38, 40-75, and 79-85 are pending.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

2. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

> The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

3. Claims 1-2, 4-11, 13-38, 40-75, and 79-85 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 1 recites "automatically providing to the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product". However, the preceding limitation states determining whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer. Therefore, in the preceding limitation, the manufacturer and the service provider are distinct from each other and the service provider is recited singularly. Therefore, it is unclear as to who the limitation "service providers authorized" is specifically referring. Further, it is unclear as to what qualifies the service provider as

authorized – is it based on the product information, characteristics of the service provider, etc? Therefore, it is unclear what is specifically occurring in this claim. For examination purposes, examiner has construed this limitation as that some authorized provider is automatically provided to a user, the providers not specifically the manufacturer or the service provider of the preceding limitation. Clarification is required.

Claims 2, 4-11, 13-18, 73, and 79-85 depend from claim 1 and therefore contain the same deficiencies.

Claims 19, 28, 46, 55, and 64 recites substantially similar limitations to claim 1 and therefore is rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, for the same reasons discussed above.

Claims 20-27 and 74 depend from claim 19 and therefore contain the same deficiencies.

Claims 29-38, 40-45, and 75 depend from claim 28 and therefore contain the same deficiencies.

Claims 47-54 depend from claim 46 and therefore contain the same deficiencies.

Claims 56-63 depend from claim 55 and therefore contain the same deficiencies.

Claims 65-72 depend from claim 1 and therefore contain the same deficiencies.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 1-2, 4-11, 13-18, 28-38, 40-45, 73, and 79-85 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Customer Support System (CircuitCity.com) in view of Suliman, Jr., et al. (U.S. 2001/0053980) and in further view of O'Connor et al. (U.S. 2001/0011225).

As per claim 1, Customer Support System discloses a method of enabling scheduling of a service call in a computing environment, the method comprising:

obtaining product information regarding a product from a user of the computing environment (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 12, pages 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein product information is received from the user of the computer environment);

determining whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the user determines via a computing unit whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer or service provider);

automatically providing the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the user determines via a computing unit whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer or service provider. The computer displays to the user information referencing who is authorized to fix the product);

providing to the user, from whom the product information is obtained, at least one available appointment within a calendar schedule for scheduling a service call with at least one service provider based on the product information and on said determination made (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1,

wherein the user is provided a service call based on the product information and the determination made concerning the manufacturer); and

providing a price estimate (See at least page 2, wherein a price estimate is offered to the user before the repair is actually scheduled); and

wherein the providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is scheduled for the appointment in real-time).

However, Customer Support System does not expressly disclose determining by a first computing unit including a web browser, automatically providing the user an appointment without interaction between the user and any other human being and enabling the user to select one available appointment for at least one service provider from the calendar schedule in real-time. Further, Customer Support System does not expressly disclose automatically providing a service call price estimate without interaction between the user and any other human being that varies based on a regional location of the user.

Suliman, Jr., et al. discloses a system that obtains product information regarding a product from a user of the computing environment (See paragraph 0010-1, 0029, 0037, wherein product information, including warranty information), determining by a first computing unit including a web browser warranty, repair and service organization information (See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein a computer including a web browser compiles and manipulates data concerning warranty and organizations for repair and service), and

automatically providing the user an appointment without interaction between the user and any other human being (See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein the user is

automatically provided an appointment by the system, the information displayed on the screen). Suliman, Jr., et al. further discloses displaying the at least one available appointment for scheduling in real-time the service call (See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein the user is automatically provided an appointment by the system, the information displayed on the screen. See paragraphs 12, 27, and 38 which disclose real-time interactions). However, Suliman, Jr., et al. does not expressly disclose that the available appointment is displayed within a calendar.

O'Connor discloses an Internet based system that enables the user to select one available appointment for at least one service provider from the calendar schedule (See figure 2 and paragraphs 0007, 0009, 0024, 0031-2).

Customer Support System teaches a web-enabled tool that allows a user via his computing device to locate a service provider or manufacturer with which to make an appointment. The user is provided an appointment after interacting with the service provider or manufacturer via the telephone. Suliman, Jr., et al. teaches a system by which a user registered his product and the system automatically communicates with service organizations via the World Wide Web to provide the user automatically with an appointment for repair or service. This system maintains product information, such as warranty terms. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the user an appointment using automated means such as the system of Suliman, Jr., et al. in order to increase the efficiency of scheduling an appointment by connecting consumers and service organizations over a network, thus allowing consumers to schedule repair and maintenance "at the touch of a

button" and allowing the service organization (such as a repair shop) to more efficiently prepare reports. See paragraphs 0014 and 0076 of Suliman, Jr., et al.

Further, Customer Service Support and Suliman, Jr., et al. disclose scheduling an appointment with a service provider based on details of a product. Suliman, Jr., et al. discloses a web-based system that allows a user to register his product and then automatically communicates with service organizations via the World Wide Web to provide the user with an appointment for repair or service. O'Connor et al. discloses an Internet based calendaring system and calendar interface used to provide the user with an appointment. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to display the available appointment to the user in a calendar format in order to more efficiently allow a user to make an appointment with a business. See paragraphs 0007, 0009, 0018-9 of O'Connor et al.

Finally, Customer Service Support discloses providing price estimates before the full service is booked. It is old and well known that service providers post estimates of prices in a price schedule on their websites for service calls (See argument below). Examiner further takes official notice that it is old and well known that prices vary regionally, such as between different cities, different states, and different countries (for example, it is old and well known that the cost of living (and thus salaries and prices) vary across the United States). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the user with the price estimate automatically in order to increase customer satisfaction by connecting consumers and service organizations over a network, thus allowing consumers to schedule repair and maintenance "at the touch of a button" knowing full information ahead of time. See paragraphs 0014 and 0076 of Suliman, Jr., et al. Further, it would have been obvious to one of

ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to vary this price estimate based on the location of the user in order to more accurately convey pricing information to a user based on old and well known variations in cost across the country (and/or world).

As per claim 2, Customer Support System discloses wherein the product information comprises a location of the product and at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number, and wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the location of the product (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 12, pages 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein product information is received, such as product location and manufacturer, and the appointment is scheduled based on the location).

As per claim 4, Customer Support System discloses wherein the providing comprises selecting the at least one available appointment from a plurality of appointments, and wherein the plurality of appointments are associated with a plurality of service providers at a plurality of locations, and providing the user a preferred service provider (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, page 12, page 22, sections 1-4, page 25, which discloses a plurality of locations at which the appointment can be made, wherein the user is scheduled an appointment with the selected provider).

As per claim 5, Customer Support System discloses wherein the providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is scheduled for the appointment in real-time).

As per claim 6, Customer Support System discloses wherein the providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment as unavailable in the event

another user has selected the at least one available appointment (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1).

As per claims 7-8, Customer Service Support discloses the user providing product information (See page 1, sections 2-5, pages 3-4, page 12, and page 22, sections 1-2, wherein the product information is provided). However, Customer Service Support does not expressly disclose and Suliman, Jr., et al. discloses providing suggested product information to the user for use by the user in providing product information, the information comprising at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number (See paragraphs 0055-7, wherein the registration information is pre-populated or selected from choices in drop down menus, the information including manufacturer and model).

Customer Support System teaches a web-enabled tool that allows a user enter product information via his computing device and to locate a service provider or manufacturer. Suliman, Jr., et al. teaches a system by which a user enters product information in a web-based program, the product information entered by using pre-populated form or by selecting from choices in drop down menus form. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to suggest product information to the user in order to increase the accuracy of the data input into the system by forcing consumers to enter data in a predefined and structured manner. See paragraph 0055-6 of Suliman, Jr., et al.

As per claim 9, Customer Support System discloses providing to the user a suggested nature of a problem based on the product information (See page 17 and page 23, section 2, which discloses customer support).

As per claim 10, Customer Support System teaches obtaining one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1).

As per claim 11, Customer Support System discloses notifying the service provider of the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the service provider is scheduled and performs the service).

As per claim 13, Customer Support System discloses providing to the user at least one available appointment for scheduling a service call based on the product information (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1). However, Customer Support System does not expressly disclose the available appointment selected by the user being set as unavailable for other users.

Customer Support System discloses scheduling available technicians for appointments. It is well known in the art that a service provider is a limited resource and when a service provider is scheduled for an appointment, he/she is unavailable at that time for another appointment. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to make the service call appointment selected by the user unavailable to other users in order to more efficiently schedule technicians by ensuring that the technicians are not double booked.

As per claim 14, Customer Support System discloses a method further comprising validating warranty product information (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the warranty is validated).

As per claim 15, Customer Support System teaches a method further comprising obtaining a nature of a problem of the product, and providing do it yourself repair information based on the nature of the problem (See page 17, page 23, section 2, wherein a technical support line is disclosed).

As per claim 16, Customer Support System discloses wherein the obtaining the product information at the first computing unit from input of the product information by the user at a second computing unit coupled to the first computing unit via a communications network (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 12, pages 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1).

As per claim 17, Customer Support System teaches wherein a communications network is used that is accessible by either the order taker or the customer as well as the technicians (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 12, pages 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1).

As per claim 18, Customer Support System discloses wherein said service call is for repair of a home appliance, the authorized service provider comprising a service provider satisfying requirements for becoming one authorized service provider for the product (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 12, pages 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, which discusses a computer. See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the user determines via a computing unit whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer or service provider).

Claims 28-38 and 40-45 recite equivalent limitations to claims 1-11 and 13-18, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale relied upon above.

As per claim 73, Customer Support System teaches wherein said determining whether the product is serviced comprises determining whether the product is serviced by an authorized service provider if the product is not serviced by the manufacturer, the authorized service provider having agreed with the manufacturer to provide a service similar to that provided by the manufacturer (See at least page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the service provider is an authorized service provider).

As per claim 79, Customer Support System teaches a priority to the service call if the product is out of warranty, wherein said providing a priority including providing the priority to the service call over a service call corresponding to a product that is under warranty (See page 1, section 4, wherein those with warranty's with manufacturers are first asked to contact the manufacturer. Those out of warranty may schedule directly).

As per claim 80, Customer Service System teaches the at least one available appointment includes at least two available appointments, providing a number of the at least two available appointments if the product is out of warranty, wherein said providing a number includes providing the at least two available appointments that are higher in number than a number of at least one available appointment corresponding to a product under warranty (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is provided an appointment).

As per claim 81, Customer Service Support discloses scheduling a service call for a user (See at least page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is provided an appointment). Suliman, Jr., et al. teaches a system with a first and second computing unit and automatically providing and scheduling an

appointment to the user using stored product information and a repair link located on the networked site (See paragraphs 0014, 0076). Suliman, Jr., et al. further discloses a communication means via the networked system that allows parties, such as the consumer, manufacturer, and service organization, to send messages and communications amongst each other (See paragraphs 0011, 0029, 0039, 0076). However, Customer Service Support and Suliman, Jr., et al. do not expressly disclose the message of a reminder of an appointment that is provided before a time at which the appointment is scheduled.

O'Connor et al. discloses a reminder of an appointment that is provided before a time at which the appointment is scheduled (See paragraph 0035).

Providing reminders, such as taught by O'Connor et al., of appointments was well known in the service industry at the time of the invention. Since the system of Suliman, Jr., et al. is capable of communicating and messaging concerning a service and repair appointment, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide a reminder of the service appointment scheduled in Customer Support System in order to more efficiently make appointments with people in disparate locations.

As per claim 82, Customer Support System discloses providing to the user at least one available appointment for scheduling a service call (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is provided a service call based on the product information and the determination made concerning the manufacturer). However, Customer Support System does not expressly disclose selecting, via a graphical user interface, a portion of the calendar schedule for scheduling a service call.

Suliman, Jr., et al. teaches selecting, via a graphical user interface, a portion of the calendar schedule for scheduling a service call (See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein the user is automatically provided an appointment by the system, the information displayed on the screen).

Customer Support System teaches a web-enabled tool that allows a user via his computing device to locate a service provider or manufacturer with which to make an appointment. The user is provided an appointment after interacting with the service provider or manufacturer via the telephone. Suliman, Jr., et al. teaches a system by which a user registered his product and the system automatically communicates with service organizations via the World Wide Web to provide the user automatically with an appointment for repair or service. This system maintains product information, such as warranty terms. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the user an appointment using the graphical user interface of Suliman, Jr., et al. in order to increase the efficiency of scheduling an appointment by connecting consumers and service organizations over a network, thus allowing consumers to schedule repair and maintenance "at the touch of a button". See paragraphs 0014 and 0076.

As per claim 83, Customer Support System discloses that the product has encountered the problem (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 12, pages 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1). However, neither Customer Support System nor does Suliman, Jr., et al. expressly discloses prioritizing, by the first computing unit, a problem associated with the product.

Both Customer Support System and Suliman, Jr., et al. teach using product information to make an appointment for service. It is old and well known in the art to prioritize problems, such as prioritizing emergencies and urgent calls and responding to them quicker then other service calls. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to consider priority of a problem when scheduling an appointment in order to more efficiently meet the needs of the customers based on the contact terms as well as the seriousness of the problem.

As per claim 84, neither Customer Support System, O'Connor et al., nor does Suliman, Jr., et al. expressly discloses determining a procedure for fixing a problem associated with the product and displaying the procedure to the user, by the first computing unit.

Both Customer Support System and Suliman, Jr., et al. teach using product information to make an appointment for service. Suliman, Jr., et al. specifically discloses a website by which the user can register his/her product and receive information concerning that product. It is old and well known in the art that websites concerning products include "FAQs" and other informational pages that would include do-it-yourself information concerning the product. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the user a procedure for fixing a problem associated with the product and to display the procedure to the user in order to increase the efficiency of repairing a product by providing the user information via the website. See paragraphs 0014 and 0076 of Suliman, Jr., et al. that discuss the efficient use of the Internet in providing information and service.

As per claim 85, Customer Support System teaches determining whether a product is covered by a first warranty (See page 1, section 3-4, wherein it is determined if the product is covered by a manufacturer's warranty);

offering a second warranty upon determining that the product is not covered by the first warranty (See page 22, sections 2-3, page 24, wherein an extended warranty is offered through the seller).

However, Customer Support System does not expressly disclose using a computing unit to perform the determining and offering.

Suliman, Jr., et al. discloses a system that obtains and manages product information regarding a product from a user of the computing environment (See paragraph 0010-1, 0029, 0037, wherein product information, including warranty information) and determining, by a computing unit, warranty information (See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein a computer compiles and manipulates data concerning warranties).

Customer Support System teaches a web-enabled tool that allows a user via his computing device to locate a service provider or manufacturer with which to make an appointment. The user is provided an appointment after interacting with the service provider or manufacturer via the telephone, the interaction including confirming warranty information. Suliman, Jr., et al. teaches a system by which a user registers a product and the system then maintains product information, such as warranty terms, via the computing unit. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to use a computing unit to perform the determining and offering of Customer Support Systems in order to increase the efficiency of system by making information available "at the touch of a button". See paragraphs 0014 and 0076.

6. Claims 19-23, 25-27, 46-72, 74, and 75 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Customer Support System (CircuitCity.com) in view of Suliman, Jr., et al. (U.S. 2001/0053980).

As per claim 19, Customer Support System teaches a method of enabling scheduling of a service call for repair of a home appliance in a computing environment, the method comprising:

obtaining product information regarding a product at a first computing unit from input of the product information by a user at a second computing unit coupled to the first computing unit via a communications network (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 12, pages 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein product information is received from the user of the computer environment);

determining whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer (See at least page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the user determines via his/her web enabled computing unit whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer or service provider);

automatically providing the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the user determines via a computing unit whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer or service provider. The computer displays to the user information referencing who is authorized to fix the product);

automatically providing the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the user determines via a computing unit whether the product is serviced by a

manufacturer or service provider. The computer displays to the user information referencing who is authorized to fix the product);

providing to the user that input the product information at the second computing unit at least one available appointment for scheduling a service call based on the product information and on said determination made (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is provided a service call based on the product information and the determination made concerning the manufacturer);

providing a price estimate (See at least page 2, wherein a price estimate is offered to the user before the repair is actually scheduled);

wherein the providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is scheduled for the appointment in real-time.

However, Customer Support System does not expressly disclose determining by a second computing unit including a web browser or automatically providing the user an appointment without interaction between the user and any other human being, the automatically providing including a determination of whether to display the at least one available appointment in real-time. Further, Customer Support System does not expressly disclose automatically providing from the first computing unit to the user a price estimate for the service call (prior to scheduling the service call) without interaction between the user and any other human being. Further, Customer Support System does not expressly disclose that the price estimate varies on a regional location of the user.

Suliman, Jr., et al. discloses a system that obtains product information regarding a product from a user of the computing environment (See paragraph 0010-1, 0029, 0037, wherein product information, including warranty information), determining by a second computing unit including a web browser warranty, repair and service organization information (See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein a computer with a browser compiles and manipulates data concerning warranty and organizations for repair and service), and automatically providing the user an appointment without interaction between the user and any other human being, the automatically providing including a determination of whether to display the at least one available appointment (See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein the user is automatically provided an appointment by the system, the information displayed on the screen), and scheduling in real-time the service call (See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein the user is automatically provided an appointment by the system, the information displayed on the screen. See paragraphs 12, 27, and 38 which disclose real-time interactions).

However, Suliman, Jr., et al. does not expressly disclose that the available appointment is displayed within a calendar.

Suliman, Jr., et al. discloses a web-based system that allows a user to register his product and then automatically communicates with service organizations via the World Wide Web to provide the user with an appointment for repair or service. Using calendar formats is a well-known way to convey date information to a user of a website. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to display the available appointment to the user in a calendar format in order to more efficiently communicate the date information in a more readable and comprehendible manner.

However, Suliman, Jr., et al. does not expressly disclose automatically providing from the first computing unit to the user a price estimate for the service call without interaction between the user and any other human being.

Customer Support System teaches a web-enabled tool that allows a user via his computing device to locate a service provider or manufacturer with which to make an appointment. The user is provided an appointment after interacting with the service provider or manufacturer via the telephone. Suliman, Jr., et al. teaches a system by which a user registered his product and the system automatically communicates with service organizations via the World Wide Web to provide the user automatically with an appointment for repair or service. This system maintains product information, such as warranty terms. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the user an appointment using automated means such as the system of Suliman, Jr., et al. in order to increase the efficiency of scheduling an appointment by connecting consumers and service organizations over a network, thus allowing consumers to schedule repair and maintenance "at the touch of a button" and allowing the service organization (such as a repair shop) to more efficiently prepare reports. See paragraphs 0014 and 0076 of Suliman, Jr., et al.

Further, Customer Service Support discloses providing price estimates before the full service is booked. It is old and well known that service providers post estimates of prices for service calls in a price schedule on their websites that may be viewed prior to scheduling service (See argument below). Examiner further takes official notice that it is old and well known that prices vary regionally, such as between different cities, different states, and different countries (for example, it is old and well known that the cost of living (and thus salaries and prices) vary

across the United States). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the user with the price estimate automatically in order to increase customer satisfaction by connecting consumers and service organizations over a network, thus allowing consumers to schedule repair and maintenance "at the touch of a button" knowing full information. See paragraphs 0014 and 0076 of Suliman, Jr., et al. Further, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to vary this price estimate based on the location of the user in order to more accurately convey pricing information to a user based on old and well known variations in cost across the country (and/or world).

As per claim 20, Customer Support System discloses wherein the product information comprises a location of the product and at least a product manufacturer, and wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the location of the product (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 12, pages 15-16, page 22; sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein product information is received, such as product location and manufacturer, and the appointment is scheduled based on the location).

As per claim 21, Customer Support System discloses wherein the providing comprises selecting the at least one available appointment from a plurality of appointments, and wherein the plurality of appointments are associated with a plurality of service providers at a plurality of locations (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, page 12, page 22, sections 1-4, page 25, which discloses a plurality of locations at which the appointment can be made).

As per claim 22, Customer Support System discloses wherein the providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3,

section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is scheduled for the appointment in real-time).

As per claim 23, Customer Support System discloses wherein the providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment as unavailable in the event another user has selected the at least one available appointment (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1).

As per claim 25, Customer Support System teaches obtaining one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1).

As per claim 26, Customer Support System discloses notifying the service provider of the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the service provider is scheduled and performs the service).

As per claim 27, Customer Support System discloses providing to the user at least one available appointment for scheduling a service call based on the product information (See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1). However, neither Customer Support System nor Suliman, Jr., et al. expressly disclose the available appointment selected by the user being set as unavailable for other users.

Customer Support System discloses scheduling available technicians for appointments. It is well known in the art that a service provider is a limited resource and when a service provider is scheduled for an appointment, he/she is unavailable at that time for another appointment. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the

invention to make the service call appointment selected by the user unavailable to other users in order to more efficiently schedule technicians by ensuring that the technicians are not double booked.

Each of claim groups 46-54, 55-63, and 64-72 recite equivalent limitations to claims 19-27, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale relied upon above.

As per claims 74 and 75, Customer Support System teaches wherein said determining whether the product is serviced comprises determining whether the product is serviced by an authorized service provider if the product is not serviced by the manufacturer, the authorized service provider having agreed with the manufacturer to provide a service similar to that provided by the manufacturer (See at least page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, page 22, sections 1-4, wherein the service provider is an authorized service provider).

7. Claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Customer Support System (CircuitCity.com) in view of Suliman, Jr., et al. (U.S. 2001/0053980) and in further view of Somheil ("Bringing Good Things to Market").

As per claim 24, neither Customer Support System nor does Suliman, Jr., et al. expressly discloses obtaining a nature of a problem of the product and providing do-it-yourself repair information based on the nature of the problem.

Somheil discloses operating instructions and do-it-yourself home repair information being provided to the user via the Internet and a website interface (See page 2, section 1).

Both Customer Support System and Suliman, Jr., et al. teach using product information to make an appointment for service. Suliman, Jr., et al. specifically discloses a website by which

the user can register his/her product and receive information concerning that product. Somheil also discloses on a website that provides product information to a user. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the user a procedure for fixing a problem associated with the product and to display the procedure to the user in order to increase the efficiency of repairing a product by providing the user information via the website. See paragraphs 0014 and 0076 of Suliman, Jr., et al. and page 2, section 1, of Somheil, which discuss the efficient use of the Internet in providing information and service.

Response to Arguments

8. Applicant's arguments with regards to the rejections based on Customer Support System (CircuitCity.com), Suliman, Jr., et al. (U.S. 2001/0053980), and O'Connor et al. (U.S. 2001/0011225) have been fully considered. In the remarks, Applicant argues that (1) none of the prior art references teach or suggest automatically providing to a user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product, (2) none of the prior art references teach or suggest providing to the user, from whom the product information is obtained, at least one available appointment within a calendar schedule in real-time for scheduling a service call with at least one service provider based on the product information and on said determination made by the first computing unit without interaction between the user and any other human being, enabling the user to select one available appointment in real-time for at least one service provider from the calendar schedule.

In response to argument (1), Examiner notes that this is a new limitation added in the current amendment and is subject to the 35 USC 112, second paragraph, rejections set forth above. Therefore, this limitation has been addressed as best understood by the Examiner.

In response to argument (2), Examiner respectfully disagrees. Customer Support System teaches scheduling a service call in a computing environment wherein the user is provided at least one available appointment within a calendar schedule for scheduling a service call with at least one service provider based on the product information and on said determination made. See page 1, sections 2-4, page 3, section 1, pages 12, 15-16, page 22, sections 1-4, page 23, section 1, wherein the user is provided a service call based on the product information and the determination made concerning the manufacturer. Further, the user is scheduled for the appointment in real-time using the system of Customer Support System. The user is able to locate and contact a proper service provider, with whom the user can schedule the appointment.

Suliman, Jr., et al. teaches that a user is automatically provided an appointment without interaction between the user and any other human being. See paragraphs 0014, 0027, 0048, 0063, 0076-7, wherein the user is automatically provided an appointment by the system, the information displayed on the screen, where the display includes at least one available appointment for scheduling the service call. While the display includes availability and appointment information, this data is not specifically stored in a calendar. Suliman, Jr. also discloses that the interaction and scheduling occur in real-time, as discussed in paragraphs 12, 27, and 38. O'Connor was relied upon to discloses an Internet based system with a calendar schedule that allows a user to select an available appointment for a service provider, see figure 2 and paragraphs 0007, 0009, 0024, 0031-2.

Customer Support System generally outlines how a company interacts with a customer who purchased a product that now needs repair. It discusses warranty information and determining who to schedule an appointment with. Suliman, Jr. et al. discloses a computer based interface for scheduling an appointment for service repair, connecting consumers and service organizations over a network, thus allowing consumers to schedule repair and maintenance "at the touch of a button" and allowing the service organization (such as a repair shop) to more efficiently prepare reports. O'Connor et al. discloses an Internet based calendaring interface used to provide the user with an appointment and thus increases the efficiency of allowing a user to make an appointment with a business. Therefore, the combination does teach and suggest all the claimed limitations.

9. Applicant's arguments with regards to the rejections based on Customer Support System (CircuitCity.com) in view of Suliman, Jr., et al. (U.S. 2001/0053980) and with regards to the rejections based on Customer Support System (CircuitCity.com) in view of Suliman, Jr., et al. (U.S. 2001/0053980) and in further view of Somheil ("Bringing Good Things to Market") have been fully considered. In the remarks, Applicant argues that (3) none of the prior art references teach or suggest automatically providing to a user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product.

In response to argument (3), Examiner notes again notes that this is a new limitation added in the current amendment and is subject to the 35 USC 112, second paragraph, rejections set forth above. Therefore, this limitation has been addressed as best understood by the Examiner.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Tam et al. (U.S. 7,188,073) disclose an on-line appointment scheduling system with a service provider, where a list of only available times of providers is displayed.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Beth Van Doren whose telephone number is 571-272-6737. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 8:00-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on 571-272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

bvd
November 05, 2007

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